

# A BIRD LIST FROM THE MAYLANDS PENINSULA, SUBURBAN PERTH W.A.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Maylands Peninsula and the adjacent portion of the Swan River are rich in bird life, 112 species being recorded by me between 1982 and 1992. However, the habitats of most of the land birds are being progressively downgraded and destroyed.

An example of such is the building of a golf course over the greater part of the mudflat which formed the western half of the peninsula. Some 35 species of birds lived on or utilised the mudflat but the majority of them no longer find the area suitable for their needs. Similarly, the quarries, which occupy about one-fifth of the peninsula and are mostly wetland, are to be filled in and the wetland avifauna, some 30 species, will be displaced together with some 20 species which utilise the quarries to a lesser degree.

The little remaining bushland was in recent years replaced by housing development but some open wasteland remains and there are some reserves and parklands.

The Maylands Peninsula is only a few kilometres from the centre of Perth and as the variety of birdlife can only decrease as development continues, it is worthwhile recording it at this time.

## THE MAYLANDS PENINSULA

The mudflat was formerly used as an aerodrome and had been subjected to earthworks such as clearing and the building of levees around its perimeter and either side of a drain which divided the mudflat in two. The mudflat was partly covered by shell and sand, which was presumably dredged from the Swan River. The drain drained freshwater from Swan Bank Road into the river, the water accumulating at Swan Bank Road after being pumped out of the north quarry, which was fed by a spring.

The original vegetation of the mudflat appears to have been sedge, samphire *Halosarcia* sp., and *Isolepis oldfieldiana*, but at the time of my observations most of the area was covered by exotic grasses such as wild oats *Avena* sp., veldt grasses *Ehrharta* spp., and "cat tails". By late spring they formed a veritable sea of grass and if burnt off in mid-summer a second growth would appear and possibly seed.

before the next winter. Pampas Grass *Cortaderia selloaria* was also well established and varied in density from isolated clumps to dense thickets. A variety of introduced shrubs were sparsely distributed over the area and there were a few *Allocasuarina* and young palms. Between the peripheral levee and the Swan River was a narrow strip of floodplain which is primarily covered by samphire. Most of the *Melaleuca* and *Allocasuarina* appear to have been planted. Most of the drain was thickly vegetated with reeds and rushes but the lower portion, where it met the Swan River, was more sparsely vegetated.

The winter rains flooded depressions in the mudflat and these varied from small pools to extensive sheets of water. This standing water usually persisted until mid-spring.

The quarries were bounded by Peninsula Road, Clarkson Road and Swan Bank Road, with Johnson Road separating the north quarry from the south quarry. Both were mined for clay for the manufacturing of bricks and their depths varied from two to three metres. A spring flowed from the bottom of the north quarry, giving it two extensive pools of water of shallow depth, and also fed into the south quarry and formed several pools of varying depth.

The north quarry was almost uniformly covered with vegetation such as sedge and Pampas Grass and the permanent water was lined with sedge and *Typha* or *Juncus* rush. The quarry was automatically pumped out and the water level remained fairly constant for several years, although the quarry contained more water in winter than in summer. When the pumping was discontinued the water level rose by a metre or two and the low-lying vegetation was drowned.

The south quarry also had vegetation lining some areas of water but also had tracts and islands of bare clay interspersed with them, and these areas attracted waders. When the water level rose, as a result of the rise in the north quarry, these low-lying flats and islands were covered by the water as was much of the vegetation.

There are two tracts of the riverside vegetation remaining. One, adjacent to the western neck of the peninsula and one south-east of the south quarry. Elsewhere it is greatly reduced, except for the peripheral strip bordering the northern half of the mudflat, or has been cleared away.

The housing area is typical suburban housing but varies from very old, with well established gardens, to very new, with recently planted gardens. It supports a good population of Laughing Doves and Singing Honeyeaters and lesser populations of Spotted Doves and Brown Honeyeaters. Other species of birds occupy the housing areas with varying degrees of intensity.

The open wasteland and the various parks and gardens are also utilised to varying degrees by the birdlife, and some species, such as the Willie Wagtail, Magpie-lark and Magpie breed there.

## THE SWAN RIVER

This section of the Swan River is a normal freshwater river in winter but ceases to flow in summer (Serventy 1948). During winter it is fresh and opaque but becomes brackish and clear in summer. It continues to support a good population of fish, particularly the Mullet *Mugil cephalus* which is most noticeable in the autumn.

Flocks of up to 250 Little Black Cormorants engage in mass fishing displays locally and at such times numbers of the Great Cormorant may join them.

The Darter is usually seen singly or in small numbers when fishing locally but up to 50 birds may gather in the riverside Flooded Gums *Eucalyptus rudis* south of the peninsula.

During winter the Great Crested Grebe is attracted to the bays in the river and the Hoary-headed Grebe is frequently seen on the river. Most Musk Duck occurring here are also to be seen on the river in winter. Flocks of up to 500 Coots frequent the river, primarily the bays, during autumn and early winter but the species completely disappears from the river in late winter, presumably to breed. Some Coots remain in the quarries and breed but the majority, about 90%, also leave the quarries.

Motor boats, yachts and activities such as water skiing upset the birdlife and this is particularly noticeable for the Coot, when hundreds of the birds may be bunched up, unable to spread out and feed normally, if at all.

The Crested Tern is commoner here than suggested by Storr and Johnstone (1988) and the Caspian Tern also visits this section of the river. Both species may be seen throughout the year.

The Pied Cormorant is reported to range up the river to Guilford (Serventy and Whittell 1976) but I have no records at Maylands.

Small numbers of the Black Swan occur on the river here but it is more abundant in the south quarry and breeds there.

## THE BIRDS

Black-throated Grebe *Podiceps novaehollandiae*. Moderately common breeding resident. 2-20.

Hoary-headed Grebe *Podiceps poliocephalus*. Uncommon visitor, mostly on the river. 1-10.

Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. Uncommon winter visitor to the river. 1-5.

Australian Pelican *Pelecanus conspicillatus*. Moderately common. 1-15.

Little Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*. Common. Small numbers and flocks up to 250.



Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Moderately common. 1-20.

Little Pied Cormorant *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*. Moderately common. 1-5.

Darter *Anhinga rufa*. Common. 1-50.

Pacific Heron *Ardea pacifica*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

White-faced Heron *Ardea novaehollandiae*. Common. 1-40.

Great Egret *Egretta alba*. Common. 1-5.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Cattle Egret *Egretta ibis*. Very rare visitor. 1.

Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Common. 1-25.

Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*. Uncommon visitor. 1-2.

Yellow-billed spoonbill *Platalea flavipes*. Common. 1-15.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus*. Moderately common breeding resident. 1-20.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*. Rare, on the river. 1-3.

Mountain Duck *Tadorna tadornoides*. Uncommon. 1-35.

Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*. Uncommon, resident population on the river. 1-5.

Black Duck *Anas superciliosus*. Common breeding resident. Small numbers up to 200.

Grey Teal *Anas gracilis*. Moderately common, breeding. Small numbers up to 200.

Blue-winged Shoveller *Anas rhynchos*. Uncommon. 1-5.

Hardhead *Aythya australis*. Uncommon, breeding. 1-10.

Wood Duck *Chenonetta jubata*. Rare visitor. 1.

Blue-billed Duck *Oxyura australis*. Rare visitor to the quarries. 1-3.

Musk Duck *Biziura lobata*. Uncommon visitor, frequents the river in winter. 1-10.

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*. Uncommon seasonal visitor, breeding. 1-4.

Whistling Kite *Haliastur sphenurus*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Brown Goshawk *Accipiter fasciatus*. Uncommon. 1-2.

Little Eagle *Aquila morphnoides*. Uncommon visitor. 1-2.

Wedge-tailed Eagle *Aquila audax*. Very rare visitor. One juvenile bird, possibly an aviary release.

White-breasted Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Marsh Harrier *Circus approximans*. Uncommon visitor. 1-2.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*. Uncommon seasonal visitor. 1.  
 Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*. Very rare. 1.  
 Australian Hobby *Falco longipennis*. Rare. 1.  
 Brown Falcon *Falco berigora*. Uncommon. 1-2.  
 Australian Kestrel *Falco cenchroides*. Moderately common, breeding. 1-4.  
 Stubble Quail *Coturnix novaezeelandiae*. Moderately common, breeding. 1-6.  
 Banded Land-rail *Gallirallus philippensis*. Moderately common, breeding. 1-2.  
 Spotless Crake *Porzana tabuensis*. Rare. 1.  
 Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*. Moderately common breeding resident. 1-15.  
 Black-tailed Native Hen *Gallinula ventralis*. Rare visitor. 1-3.  
 Dusky Moorhen *Gallinula tenebrosa*. Uncommon. 1-2.  
 Coot *Fulica atra*. Very common, breeding in quarries, migratory on river. Forms flocks of up to 500 birds.  
 Banded Plover *Vanellus tricolor*. Very rare visitor. 6.  
 Red-capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*. Moderately common visitor. 1-15.  
 Black-fronted Plover *Charadrius melanops*. Moderately common, breeding. 1-15.  
 Red-kneed Plover *Charadrius cinctus*. Moderately common visitor, breeding. 1-15.  
 Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*. Rare visitor. 1.  
 Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. Rare visitor. 1-3.  
 Common Sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*. Uncommon visitor to both the river and the quarries. 1-2.  
 Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*. Rare visitor. 2-10.  
 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*. Very rare visitor. 1.  
 Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*. Moderately common, breeding. 2-20.  
 Red-necked Avocet *Recurvirostra novaehollandie*. Rare visitor. 3.  
 Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandie*. Very common. 5-50.  
 Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*. Uncommon throughout the year. 1-2.  
 Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*. Moderately common throughout the year. 1-10.  
 Domestic Pigeon *Columba livia*. Common. 2-40.

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*. Common, breeding. 1-4.

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*. Very common, breeding. 1-20.

Rainbow Lorikeet *Trichoglossus haematodus*. Uncommon visitor. 2-8.

Ring-necked Parrot *Platycercus zonarius*. Uncommon resident. 1-4.

Elegant Parrot *Neophema elegans*. Very rare visitor. 15.

Carnaby's Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus latirostris*. Moderately common seasonal visitor. 5-70.

Galah *Cacatua roseicapilla*. Uncommon visitor. 2-5.

Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea*. Uncommon visitor. Small numbers up to flocks of 200.

Pallid Cuckoo *Cuculus pallidus*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Fantailed Cuckoo *Cuculus flabelliformis*. Rare winter visitor. 1.

Horsefield's Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx basalis*. Very rare visitor. 1.

Shining Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx lucidus*. Rare visitor. 1.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo gigas*. Uncommon resident. 1-5.

Sacred Kingfisher *Halcyon sancta*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Rainbow Bee-eater *Merops ornatus*. Uncommon visitor. 2-10.

White-backed Swallow *Cheramoeca leucosterna*. Uncommon, irregular visitor. 2-7.

Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena*. Common resident, breeding. Small numbers up to flocks of 200.

Tree Martin *Hirundo nigricans*. Common resident. Small numbers usually but very large flocks sometimes.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandia*. Moderately common, breeding, partly resident. 1-20.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandie*. Moderately common. 1-10.

White-winged Triller *Lalage sueurii*. Rare visitor. 1-5.

Red-capped Robin *Petroica goodenovii*. Very rare visitor. 1.

Scarlet Robin *Petroica multicolor*. Very rare visitor. 1.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*. Uncommon visitor. 1.

Grey Fantail *Rhipidura fuliginosa*. Uncommon winter visitor. 1-2.

Willie Wagtail *Rhipidura leucophrys*. Moderately common, breeding. 1-4.

Western Flyeater *Gerygone fusca*. Rare. 1-2.

Western Thornbill *Acanthiza inornata*. Very rare. 1-2.

Yellow-rumped Thornbill *Acanthiza chrysorrhoa*. Rare visitor. 1.

Variegated Fairy-wren *Malurus lamberti*. Rare winter visitor. 2-10.

White-winged Fairy-wren *Malurus leuconotus*. Uncommon resident. 2-10.



Clamorous Reed-warbler *Acrocephalus stentoreus*. Uncommon resident. 1-2.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus gramineus*. Moderately common resident. 1-2.

Brown Songlark *Cincloramphus cruralis*. Rare visitor. 1.

Australian Sittella *Daphoenositta chrysoptera*. Very rare visitor. 2.

Mistletoebird *Dicaeum hirundinaceum*. Uncommon, irregular visitor. 1.

Striated Pardalote *Pardalotus striatus*. Uncommon. 1-2.

Grey-breasted White-eye *Zosterops lateralis*. Moderately common. 2-20.

Brown Honeyeater *Lichmera indistincta*. Common resident, mostly. 1-5.

Singing Honeyeater *Meliphaga virescens*. Very common resident. 1-5.

New-holland Honeyeater *Phylidonyris novaehollandiae*. Very rare visitor. 1-2.

White-cheeked Honeyeater *Phylidonyris niger*. Very rare visitor. 1-2.

Western Spinebill *Acanthorhynchus superciliosus*. Rare. 1-2.

Little Wattle-bird *Anthochaera chrysoptera*. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Red Wattle-bird *Anthochaera carunculata*. Uncommon visitor. 1-3.

White-fronted Chat *Ephianura albifrons*. Uncommon visitor. 2-30.

Chestnut-breasted Mannikin *Lonchura castaneothorax*. Uncommon. 2-30.

Magpie-lark *Grallina cyanoleuca*. Moderately common, breeding resident. 1-4.

Grey Butcherbird *Cracticus torquatus*. Rare visitor. 1.

Australian Magpie *Cracticus tibicen*. Moderately common, breeding resident. 2-10.

Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides*. Common, breeding. 2-10.

#### ADDITIONAL SPECIES OF THE AREA

Rufous Night Heron *Nycticorax caledonicus*. West Belmont. Uncommon resident. 1-2.

Royal Spoonbill *Platalea regia*. West Belmont. Very rare visitor. 1.

Chestnut Teal *Anas castanea*. Bayswater. Rare visitor. 1-2.

Pink-eared Duck *Malacorhynchus membranaceus*. Bayswater. Common breeding resident. 5-25.

Broad-tailed Thornbill *Acanthiza apicalis*. Bayswater. Rare visitor. 2.

Rufous Songlark *Cincloramphus mathewsi*. Bayswater. Very rare visitor. 1.

## REFERENCES

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